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SUBJECT: FRENCH NSA ON AF/PAK, CLIMATE CHANGE, EUROPEAN
SECURITY, GOLDSTONE, AND MORE

REF: A. NATO 453
[1](#)B. STATE 108183

Classified By: Ambassador Charles H. Rivkin, Reasons 1.4(b), (d).

1.(C/NF) SUMMARY: In an October 21 meeting with Ambassador Rivkin, Diplomatic Counselor to the President (NSA-equivalent) Jean-David Levitte clarified GOF policy on a number of key issues. Discussing next steps in Afghanistan's political drama, Levitte also framed GOF opposition to funding the NATO AWACS (ref a) as based on an assessment that limited resources could be better used for other equipment. He also undertook to try to hasten French aid to Pakistan (ref b). On climate change, Levitte said France is anxious to work with the United States to help bring the U.S. and European positions closer together, and believes that an interim summit could serve to bring major players together in advance of Copenhagen. Levitte provided the clearest explanation yet of evolving French thinking on how to use an OSCE summit to engage the Russians on European security by tying it to the Corfu process and the U.S. "reset" policy. He also put the GOF's non-vote on the Goldstone report in the context of French and UK efforts to encourage the Israelis to set up their own credible investigation. Levitte said he had spoken earlier in the day with NSA Jim Jones about the Vienna talks with Iran and expressed optimism about the outcome. Levitte also addressed the future of the French MFO air asset in the Sinai and the mission of the new special envoy to North Korea, Jack Lang.

IRAN

[1](#)2. (C/NF) Levitte opened the conversation by saying he had earlier that day spoken with NSA Jones about the Vienna talks with Iran. He was comfortable that we had a common position and was modestly hopeful about the outcome.

AFGHANISTAN: ELECTIONS AND AWACS

[1](#)3. (C/NF) Remarking that Afghans "took to politics quickly," Levitte described Karzai's acceptance of a second electoral round as a difficult situation well managed by international players. He emphasized SFRC Chairman Kerry's role - bringing in the French and UK ambassadors - in pushing Karzai on the issue. Levitte said a deal on a unity government with

Abdullah was still possible, but that Abdullah was driving a hard bargain. Asked about the French vote against using common NATO funding for the deployment of an AWACS for use in Afghanistan (ref a), Levitte argued that the AWACS seemed to be a poor use of limited resources. He said when the AWACS proposal first surfaced, France was reeling from the August 2008 ambush in Uzbini in Afghanistan that left 10 French troops dead, a disaster Levitte said was intensified in part by a lack of helicopters to bring reinforcements and to provide close air cover. Further, the French understanding was that the AWACS would be used primarily for air traffic control to make up for weak infrastructure in Afghanistan. Thus the GOF's opposition at the NATO Senior Resource Board was based on a conviction that using common funding on the AWACS would be wasteful as this would not address the most pressing operational needs.

AID TO PAKISTAN: NO TIMELINE

14. (C) Delivering the Secretary's message contained in ref b, Ambassador Rivkin emphasized the need for France to move quickly on disbursing the 200 million euros the GOF pledged at the Tokyo Conference. Levitte responded that, while President Sarkozy reiterated French support for Pakistan to President Zardari in New York during UNGA, France was still just a "junior partner" in Pakistan. When the Ambassador countered that French pledges for Pakistan were significant and that the GOF was indeed an important partner, Levitte acknowledged that it was important to disburse the French

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pledge quickly, although he provided no specific timeline to do so. (NOTE: Post will follow up with relevant GOF agencies for more details about plans to disburse aid to Pakistan. END NOTE.)

CLIMATE CHANGE: WE WANT TO HELP

15. (C/NF) Turning to climate change, Ambassador Rivkin asked for Levitte's reaction to the recent discussion between Presidents Obama and Sarkozy. Levitte said that the French want to be of assistance to the United States as we all seek a way forward. However, he worried that the U.S. was handicapped by its relatively late start, noting that the European Council had agreed on an EU position in December 2008. Ultimately, Levitte said, the United States had to agree to emissions cuts comparable to those agreed by Europe.

However, France was willing to meet the USG half way, suggesting that, for example, if the United States agreed to overall emissions cuts of 80% by 2050, the Europeans could agree to the United States extending to 2030 the reduction targets which Europe would meet by 2020. Meanwhile, because the GOF believed it would be difficult for the U.S. Senate to approve a climate change bill by December, the French were thinking that the Copenhagen Summit could be used to produce a detailed but non-legally binding political commitment which could be translated several months later into a treaty. Levitte recognized President Obama's reluctance to entertain an interim summit, but said there is growing support for one that could be held, for example, on the margins of APEC on November 15-16, prior to President Obama's trip to China, to bring together all the major actors in a final pre-Copenhagen push. According to Levitte, the time was ripe: the Indians and Russians had indicated an interest and UN SYG Ban Ki-Moon was actively supporting such a meeting. Levitte also said he thought the Chinese might be making progress and be more ready to talk about concrete numbers. He said France had reason to believe that Chinese President Hu Jintao had two speech texts before him in New York, one with numbers and one without. He chose to use the one without numbers after hearing President Obama's speech. Levitte cautioned that this needs to be checked out, but, if true, would indicate

that the Chinese too are getting more serious.

EUROPEAN SECURITY: WE NEED A SUMMIT TO ENGAGE RUSSIA

16. (C/NF) Responding to the Ambassador's request for an update on French thinking about Russia, Levitte said the Russians remained unwilling to admit that they could not maintain a sphere of influence over neighboring states. Nevertheless, it was critical to engage Russia as a partner in European security, not an adversary, and Western allies needed to provide a counterproposal to the suggestions the Russians made in 2008. The OSCE is the perfect forum for such engagement, since it brings together not only European and North American allies with Russia, but also includes Central Asian states and non-NATO ally Russian neighbors such as Ukraine and Georgia. Additionally, unlike NATO, the OSCE is designed to deal with non-military aspects of security, including democracy and human rights, as called for in the Helsinki Final Act. An OSCE summit, perhaps at Vienna following the 2010 NATO summit in Lisbon, would allow the West to set the agenda for European security discussions, and could include consensual topics, such as counterterrorism and counternarcotics. Deputy Diplomatic Counselor Damien Loras elaborated, saying an OSCE summit would also allow Western allies to put frozen conflicts such as Nagorno-Karabakh and Transnistria on the table, together with the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe. Further, such a summit would fit well with the Obama administration's "reset" policy with Russia. In an attempt to calm concerns about President Sarkozy's public suggestion of an OSCE summit during his recent visit to Kazakhstan, Levitte clarified that Kazakhstan would not be an appropriate host, but that close links between the Kazakh leadership and Medvedev meant that the Kazakhs could be useful in encouraging Russian cooperation.

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17. (C/NF) Asked whether the GOF felt the ongoing Corfu process was insufficient, Levitte stressed that Russia could not be allowed to slip away from the commitments it made at the last OSCE summit in 1999, and specifically that the Russians needed to reaffirm their commitment to the Helsinki Final Act. However, the OSCE ministerial in December would provide an opportunity to probe further, and if Russia evinces no political will to engage constructively, then plans for a summit could be scrapped. Loras added that the Russians seem to be backing away from the Corfu process and that it will have largely run its course over the next two to three months. Instead of letting it fade away, an OSCE summit could represent an outcome of Corfu.

GOLDSTONE REPORT: WE ARE TRYING TO HELP ISRAEL

18. (C/NF) Levitte said the French decision to not vote on the resolution on the Goldstone report was the result of a "tough discussion" with Israeli authorities and was coordinated with the UK. France's goal was to encourage the GOI to undertake a credible investigation into the allegations in the report. Such self-examination should be a source of Israeli pride in their democratic values, and Levitte likened a potential Israeli investigation to inquiries carried out by the USG in the wake of Abu Ghraib and by France on questions related to the massacre at Srebrenica and the genocide in Rwanda. Additionally, France hoped to press Israel to allow greater humanitarian access to Gaza. Levitte said that if Israel had shown willingness to address these concerns, France would have voted no. Ambassador Rivkin pointed out that we cannot simply ignore the Goldstone report, which is all the more unhelpful given efforts underway to relaunch peace negotiations. Levitte agreed, and said the French had even hoped to delay the vote to give the Israelis more time, but were unsuccessful. In the end, the French decision to not

vote at all allows the GOF to remain in a position to be helpful to the Israelis in the event the GOI decides to go ahead with an investigation.

SINAI: UNIFIL A BETTER USE OF FRENCH RESOURCES THAN MFO

¶9. (C/NF) Ambassador Rivkin stressed to Levitte the importance the USG places on France maintaining the plane it has deployed to the Sinai peninsula as part of the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO). Levitte said the GOF was looking to save money globally on its military operations, and added that the French view was that, as the Sinai peninsula was stable, there was little need to keep the French plane there. Acknowledging that weapons and drug smuggling were problems, Levitte said the French plane was not able to address these issues, and was intended to monitor troop movements, which France felt was not a pressing concern. Levitte said France was much more concerned about sufficiently resourcing its much larger deployment to UNIFIL in southern Lebanon, where the chances for conflict - and the need for monitoring resources - were much more significant. Levitte suggested that another European nation could replace the French plane in the Sinai, and offered to support the USG in demarching potential candidates.

NORTH KOREA: SPECIAL ENVOY WILL COORDINATE

¶10. (C/NF) Levitte expressed his thanks for the State Department's agreement to meetings "at the appropriate level" in Washington for new French special envoy to North Korea Jack Lang. He added that Lang's trip to Washington demonstrated the GOF's commitment to coordinating with the USG on North Korea, and that the French were not looking to interfere in negotiations. Admitting that the North Koreans had still not to his knowledge agreed to a meeting with Lang, Levitte added that the French were especially interested in consulting with the United States on how to most usefully play their one card of diplomatic recognition.

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COMMENT

¶11. (C/NF) Hitting many of the current hot-button issues in our bilateral relationship in a nearly hour-long meeting with Ambassador Rivkin, Levitte provided critical context backed up by the authority of a close relationship with President Sarkozy. While deploying his considerable diplomatic skills to deflect criticism on some questions, such as AWACS funding and France's lack of coordination on the Goldstone vote, he was able to frame other issues more constructively than other GOF interlocutors have done recently, including France's evolving plans for engaging Russia on European security.
RIVKIN